THE
ANSWER
Of Several
MINISTERS
in and near
BOSTON,
To that Case of Conscience,
Whether it is Lawful for a Man to Marry his Wives own Sister?

Boston in N. E.
Printed and Sold by *Bartholomew Green.*
1695.

1883, Dec. 22. Corbet legat

To the READER.

THERE is no practice so evil as not to find Advocates. It is astonishing that such a Scandal as that which is here impleaded, should have any fautors among professors of Religion in a Land of Light, when Heathen Nations have detested it, although they had no other principle but the honesty of nature to guide them. Some pretend that Death puts an end to all Relations, and that therefore a Mans Wives Sister is no more his Sister after his Wives death, and consequently that he may lawfully Marry her: But according to this allegation a mans Wives Mother is no more his Mother after his Wives death, and consequently he may Marry his Wives Mother: Nor then is his Fathers Wife or Step-Mother any more his Mother after his Fathers death, and consequently he may have his Fathers Wife; which is an impiety not so much as named amongst the honester sort of Heathen. 1 Cor. 5. 1. Others Concede, that indeed such Marriage is Sinful, but tho fieri non debuit factum valet, when once they are Married they are not to be separated they think, which is a strange and contradictory Opinion. It is as if it should be affirmed, that because men have transgressed against the light of nature, they may do so still, and live in that sin though it be to the Eternal Damnation of their Souls. Such Marriages are wickedly

wickedly Incestuous; and therefore to Question whether the Civil Authority may permit Persons so concerned to continue in Conjugal Communion, is, to make it a Question whether Magistrates may not indulge the most Scandalous transgressions of the Moral Law, and so bring the guilt of those Crimes upon the Government, and upon the whole Land where they are perpetrated. Most certainly, when John *the* Baptist *said to Herod,* It is not Lawful for thee to have thy Brothers Wife, *Mark* 6.18. *his intendment was that they ought no longer to live together as Man and Wife. If Magistrates or any other shall be reproached for their Holy Zeal in this matter, they will Suffer Persecution in the very same cause for which* John *did. Moreover, we find in the Scripture that when some had contracted Marriages contrary to the Law of God (and so have they all done that have Married their Wives Sister) it was not thought it would be sufficient for them to confess their fault, or to inhibit the like practice in others for the future, but the guilty Persons were made to put away all such Wives.* Ezra 10.3,11. Neh.13.25.

But for further Information in this point, the Reader is referred to the Answer herewith Emitted, which in few words contains enough to satisfy the Consciences of them that Enquire without an Idol in their Hearts, or that are sincerely willing to be satisfyed.

Concerning the Case of Conscience proposed to our Consideration, *Viz.*

Whether it be Lawful for a Man to Marry his Wives own Sister?

We Answer in the Negative; That *it is utterly Unlawful, Incestuous, and an Hainous Sin in the Sight of God.* For,

1. The Scripture sayes, *None shall approach to any that is near akin to him.* Lev. 18 6. Now the particulars instanced in that Chapter shew, that by kindred is meant not only *Consanguinity*, but *Affinity*, or such as are allyed by Marriage as well as by Blood. It is then clear, that a Mans Wives Sister is near akin to him: for She relates to him in the very first degree of Affinity, which is near kinred. It is a ruled Case amongst all Orthodox Divines and Judicious Casuists, That a Man may not Marry any of his Wives kindred nearer in Blood than he may of his own; nor may the Woman of her Husbands. A Man may as lawfully Marry his own Mother as his Wives Mother, his own Aunt as his Uncles Wife; so his own Sister as his Wives Sister. *Lev.* 18 14.

2. There is in the Scripture an express Prohibition of Marriage with such as are no nearer akin than a Mans Wives Sister is. To instance. A Man may not Marry his Brothers Wife. *Lev.* 18.16. *and* 20.21. *Math.* 14.4 Which Implies

that a man may not Marry his Wives Sister, who is as near akin to him as his Brothers Wife. Persons not named in the Law, if they have the same nearness with those expresly and in terms forbidden to joyn in Marriage-Relation together, are comprehended in that Law. When the Law expresly forbids the Nephew to Marry the Aunt, it implies that the Uncle may not Marry the Neece, because an Uncles Wife and an Aunts Husband are equally akin. It is (as Dr. *Hall* in his Cases of Conscience has well noted) easy to observe, that all the severalties of the degrees prohibited run still upon the Male, under which the exorbitances of the other Sex are comprehended. Thus though a Mans Marrying his Wives Sister is not in so many expres Words and Syllables prohibited, by clear implication and necessary Consequence it is so It is a very weak Argument, to say, inasmuch as Marrying with the Wives Sister is not in terms forbidden in the 18 Chapter of *Leviticus*, that therefore it is lawful. A Mans Marrying with his own Daughter is not expresly forbidden in that Law: But since it is said, he may not Marry his Daughter in Law or his Sons Wife, *Verse* 15. by necessary deduction it follows, that he may not Marry his own Daughter. It is not in expres terms said, that a Woman shall not Marry two Brothers: and it is certainly as lawful for a Woman to Marry two Brothers as for a Man two Sisters. Yet this is so highly against the light of Nature as well as Scripture, as that it

was of old decreed in the *Neocæſarian Council*, that whoſoever ſhould do ſo, ſhould be rejected unto death.

3. The Light of Nature and Laws of Nations have Condemned this Practice as Abominable. The *Grecians*, *Romans* and the *Arabians*, who had no light of Scripture, only the Law written in their hearts by nature, did prohibit ſuch Marriages. The *Karcan* Jews (who in Oppoſition to the *Talmudiſts* adhere to the Books of *Moſes*.) Condemn them. So have Chriſtian Nations done: And in our own Nation in ſpecial. The Table of the Church of England *ſet forth by Authority*, does expreſly declare, that a Man may not Marry with his Wives Siſter. Mr. *Reyner* (that worthy Miniſter of the Goſpel at *Lincoln*) in his Judicious Anſwer to the Caſe before us, ſhews, that the Laws of the Land prohibit this Marriage; and he refers his Reader for Information to Sir *Ed. Cooks Inſtitute*, Part. 2. *p.* 683. And to the Statutes of 25 *H.* 8. Chap. 22. and his 28 year. Chapt. 7. and his 30 year Chap. 38.

4. Learned Divines have with a great concurrence teſtifyed againſt ſuch Marriage as unlawful. *Zanchy* obſerves, that all the Antient Fathers Witneſſed againſt it. So have our Proteſtant Divines: Particularly *Beza*, *Junius*, *Gerhard*, *Polanus*, *Bucanus*, and the *Geneva-Divines*: Alſo, *Zepperus*. and *Voetius*: And of *our* own Nation, Mr. *Perkins*, Dr. *Ames*, Dr. *Hall*, Dr. *Willet*, Dr. *Hamond*. Likewiſe the Engliſh *Annotators* on *Levit.*

18.16. And Mr. *Poole*, and Mr. *Clark* in their Notes on that place. Yea, the Assembly at Westminster (in which were many Eminent Persons) in their Confession of Faith, Chap. 24. Sect. 4. have these words. *Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of Consanguinity or Affinity forbidden in the word: Nor can such Incestuous Marriages be made lawful by any Law of Man, so as those Persons may live together as Man & Wife. The man may not Marry any of his Wives kindred nearer in Blood then he may of his own; nor the Woman of her Husbands kindred nearer in Blood than of her own.* These are the words of that Renowned Assembly. Moreover it is well known that such Marriage was Condemned as unlawful, by the Universities of *Europe* in the days of K. *Henry* 8

As for the Objection that it is said, Lev. 18.18. *Thou shalt not take a Wife to her Sister to vex her besides the other in her life time.* By *Sister* in that place not a natural Sister in a strict sense, but any other Woman is intended: The same expression in the Original is else where translated, *One to another*. Ezek. 1.9. The Hebrews are wont to give the name of Brother and Sister to all Neighbours, and more especially to all that are of the same Nation. *Gen.* 19.7. *Isa.* 19.2. *Ezek.* 16.45, 48. The Jews (as some Learned men have well observed) did sometimes take Second Wives, whilst the first was living, on purpose to vex the first Wife; which was a very great Wickedness. The design then of that Text is to prohibit

Polygamy, but giveth no allowance to any man to Marry his Sister after his Wives Death.

Finally. That Practice is one of those Abominations, for which the Holy God punished the Heathen Nations: And it is a burning Shame, that ever it should be heard of in such a Land of Uprightness as *New-England* once was and ever ought to be. It is very sad, that a Practice which the Scripture calls *Wickedness* and *Abomination*, and which the light of Nature condemns, should find any Patrons amongst us. A great Divine has truly noted, that this is one of those iniquities which provokes the God of Heaven to send enemies upon a People, and to make their Land desolate. If after the Lord has stirred up his Servants in the Ministry to bear their Testimony against it, (and we hope their is no Minister in the Land either so ignorant, or under such a Penal and Judicial desertion of God as to justify it) men shall still go on openly to Practise a thing so vile, and that by the connivance of those who ought by Severe and Righteous Laws to inhibit it, We may fear what God will do.

INCREASE MATHER.
CHARLES MORTON.
JAMES ALLEN.
SAMUEL WILLARD.
JAMES SHERMAN.
JOHN DANFORTH.
COTTON MATHER.
NEHEMIAH WALTER.

Mrs. JUDITH HULL,

Of *Boſton*, in *N. E.* Daughter of Mr. *Edmund Quincey*; late Wife of *JOHN HULL* Eſq. deceaſed.

A Diligent, Conſtant, Fruitfull Reader and Hearer of the Word of GOD, Reſted from her Labours, June, 22. 1695. being the ſeventh day of the Week, a little before Sun-ſet; juſt about the time She uſed to begin the Sabbath.

Anno Ætatis ſuæ 69.

Epitaph

GReat *Sarah*'s Faith; joind with Good *Hannah*'s Prayer;
For Hearing of the Word, glad *Maries* Care;
Aged *Elizabeths* Juſt Walk; To dwell
Nigh Prophets, a true *Shunamitiſh* Zeal;
An *Humble* Soul, *Trim'd* with an *High* Neglect
Of *Gay Things*, but with *Ancient Glories* deck't;
All theſe Expir'd at once! Array'd with *Them*,
Our HULDAH's gone to Gods *Jeruſalem*:
Without a *Figure* ſo, with her *Laſt Breath*
Shee Triumph'd o'er that *Ho'op'ernes*, DEATH.
Perfect in *Thoughts*, *Words*, *Deeds*, She ſoars on high,
Performing what her *Name* did ſignifie.